THE GATES OF BELGRADE:

SAFETY, PRIVACY, AND NEW HOUSING PATTERNS IN THE POST-COMMUNIST CITY

An NCEEER Working Paper by

Sonia Hirt
Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University

and

Mina Petrović
University of Belgrade

The National Council for Eurasian and East European Research
University of Washington
Box 353650
Seattle, WA 98195
info@nceeer.org
http://www.nceeer.org/

TITLE VIII PROGRAM

Project Information*

Principal Investigator: **Sonia Hirt**

NCEEER Contract Number: **823-09**

Date: **December 22, 2009**

* The work leading to this report was supported in part by contract or grant funds provided by the National Council for Eurasian and East European Research, funds which were made available by the U.S. Department of State under Title VIII (The Soviet-East European Research and Training Act of 1983, as amended). The analysis and interpretations contained herein are those of the author.

Executive Summary

Compared to the prolific literature on the political and economic aspects of the post-communist transition, literature on post-1989 urban changes, including changes in housing and neighborhood patterns and changes in the quality of life of urban residents, has been relatively limited. Yet the post-communist world stretching from the heart of Europe to the Far East corner of Asia is highly urbanized: out of the nearly half a billion inhabitants of Central-East Europe and the former Soviet Union, about two-thirds reside in cities and towns. Cities were the engines of economic growth during the communist period. They were also at the forefront of radical socio-economic experimentation and restructuring during the transition period.

This paper focuses on urban changes in the Serbian capital of Belgrade: specifically, on the new trend of constructing explicitly private, gated and securitized housing. This type of housing barely existed during communism but established itself as a popular alternative in the 1990s, particularly among the "winners" in the post-communist transition. This new housing pattern, which can now be observed in many other large East European cities as well as cities around the world, reflects deepening social stratification and growing concerns about urban crime. It also suggests an increasing appreciation of privacy and semi-secluded family lifestyles that contrast sharply with the type of urban collectivism communist regimes sought to impose.

Introduction

Compared to the prolific literature on the political and economic aspects of the post-communist transition, literature on urban changes, such as changes in housing and neighborhood patterns and changes in the quality of life of urban residents, has been relatively scarce. Yet the post-communist world stretching from the heart of Europe to the Far East corner of Asia is highly urbanized: out of the nearly half a billion inhabitants of Central-East Europe and the former Soviet Union, about two-thirds reside in cities and towns.[1] Cities were the engines of economic growth during the communist period. They were also at the forefront of radical socio-economic experimentation and restructuring during the transition.

There, in cities, residents observed and experienced first-hand—usually for the first time in their lives—the type of crime and marginality, extreme wealth and extreme poverty that communist regimes had for decades successfully veiled from the public view, if not eliminated altogether. Marked by visibly deteriorating housing and infrastructure, cities in the post-communist period became in many ways the mirror in which the challenges and contradictions of the transition were most clearly—and materially—displayed.

This paper discusses the changing urban environment of the Serbian capital of Belgrade. An urban center with a population of 1.6 million residents, Belgrade is the largest city in Serbia and throughout the territory of the former Yugoslavia; it is also the third-largest city on the Danube, and the fourth-largest city in Southeast Europe. The paper focuses on changes in Belgrade's housing patterns as a reflection of the growing social stratification of Serbian society since 1989, as well as changing social perceptions regarding crime and security in the city and the proper balance between urban privacy and urban collective experiences.

Based on the results of a survey conducted in 2008, the paper reviews a prominent new housing trend in Belgrade—the trend of constructing explicitly private, securitized, gated urban residences. This type of housing barely existed during communism but established itself as a popular alternative in the 1990s, especially among urban elites. This new housing pattern, which can now be observed in many other East European cities as well as cities around the world, reflects deepening social stratification and growing concerns about urban crime. It also suggests an increasing appreciation of household privacy and semi-secluded family lifestyles that contrast sharply with the type of urban collectivism that communist regimes sought to impose.

Belgrade is a quintessential example of a city that has undergone dramatic socio-spatial changes since 1989. Once one of the most prosperous and cosmopolitan urban centers in Central-East Europe, Belgrade deteriorated visibly, in terms of housing and infrastructure, as a result of the severe economic crisis, the wars, and the international sanctions that defined the tumultuous 1990s in Serbia/Yugoslavia. During that time, the city became home to 100,000 refugees expelled from other parts of Yugoslavia. It also become home to a small class of urban "entrepreneurs" who owed their sudden rise to wealth to their political connections and the thriving grey economy. In 1999, Belgrade gained the dubious distinction of being the only European capital to be bombed at the end of the 20th century. The charred ruins of NATO-hit public buildings in fact still "decorate" parts of the city center.

The election of Serbia's first democratic post-communist government in 2000 marked a turning point in the city's recent history. As the country returned to relative economic and political stability, its capital city saw notable signs of urban regeneration. One obvious measure is that the value of construction works per year increased seven times between 2000 and 2005.[2] However, most new buildings, including the dozens of glitzy Western-style malls and business

complexes erected since 2000, serve primarily the upper and upper-middle echelon of Belgrade's society. Whereas housing output has increased significantly as well, most new units are financially inaccessible for the majority of the urban population. Public resources for housing and infrastructure improvement remain scarce. As a result, according to a study conducted under the aegis of the United Nations, as of 2005 25,000 Belgrade residents lived in 29 slums and 64 other slum-like settlements that do not meet elementary health and sanitary standards.[3]

Belgrade's residential stock today includes a wide array of options, from individual homes to row houses, and from small condominium complexes to large communist-era residential towers. In some areas of the city, entire new neighborhoods comprising mostly single-family housing were constructed in just a few short years after 1989. The cumulative result is a new residential profile of Belgrade, one that is both quantitatively and qualitatively different from that of the communist period, with a very clear shift toward smaller-scale, upper-class individual housing produced almost exclusively by the private sector.

Belgrade's Housing Patterns during Communism

Despite Marshall Tito's high-profile break with Soviet-style communism in 1948 and the much publicized reforms toward "market socialism" initiated in the mid-1960s, the Yugoslav government followed the general principles of communist city-building throughout most of the post-World War II period. This means that most land in Belgrade and other large cities was publicly owned.[4] The vast majority of housing was produced by the public sector; i.e., by large collectively owned construction enterprises. Housing distribution occurred according to central planning allocations rather than free-market exchanges,[5] with the overall purpose of eliminating class stratification and securing equal living conditions for all Yugoslavs, at least in theory.[6]

Like other East European capitals, Belgrade experienced rapid expansion in the post-World War II era. The urban population increased from about 600,000 in 1948 to 1.6 million in 1991. Since the Yugoslav government was committed to preventing a housing crisis, the city's dwelling stock increased at a pace far exceeding that of population growth, from about 107,000 dwelling units in 1950 to 512,000 in 1991. New construction was most intensive during the prosperous 1970s but slowed down significantly during the 1980s. By the late 1980s, the Yugoslav capital had no housing shortage, even though the quality of housing throughout the city varied significantly. The majority of residential units—53% in Belgrade's metro-region and 66% in the urban core— were at that time under public ownership.[7]

Solving the housing problem, at least in quantitative terms, was possible to a large extent because of the adoption *en masse* of industrialized building methods from the 1960s through the 1980s. These methods, which were widely used in all large Soviet and East European cities, permitted the construction of buildings made of pre-fabricated panels and generated substantial economies of scale.[8] The very large, rather Spartan-looking multi-family residential tower—rather than the individual house with a private yard—became the new architectural norm. Figure 1 gives an example from the largest communist-era district of Novi Beograd, i.e., New Belgrade.

The new architecture was premised, however, as much on symbolism as it was on efficiency. It conveyed the archetypical communist values of uniformity, egalitarianism and collectivism via unequivocal, material means. Collectivism was also on display in the vast open spaces that separated the large buildings. There too, the triumph of the collectivist spirit over petty private interests (and spaces) was showcased in plain, visual terms.[9]

The egalitarianism that communist ideologues promised was, of course, never achieved. Even though the starkest contrasts between the lower- and the upper-class districts that existed in

early-20th-century Belgrade were softened, socio-spatial division remained part of urban living. Perhaps the strongest reminder of an older, highly stratified, *bourgeois* Belgrade was Dedinje and, to a lesser extent, nearby Senjak and Banovo Brdo—the traditionally desirable neighborhoods of the city. Figure 2 shows the location of neighborhoods mentioned in the paper. Dedinje houses the Royal Palace (*Beli Dvor,* or the White House), the President's Residence and many embassies, as well as an impressive collection of lavish single-family residences from the early 1900s, which were designed in line with the European architectural fashions of the day.

Privacy was a valued asset of these luxury residencies—many had large green yards surrounded by highly decorative fences. During the communist period, many of the mansions were nationalized and subdivided into smaller middle-class family apartments. Others, however, were occupied without modification to their original layout, by members of the communist *nomenclatura.* Tito's family lived in Dedinje, as did Milošević's a decade later. Like their *bourgeois* predecessors, the communist mansions were gated and heavily guarded, providing a sharp contrast with the widely accessible, collectivist buildings in which the large majority of Belgrade's citizenry lived.

In the last communist decade, residential patterns in the Yugoslav capital began to deviate from the orthodox communist model that continued to dominate neighboring states such as Bulgaria and Romania. Political reforms permitted more favorable bank loans to individuals for new construction, and the share of single-family, owner-occupied housing gradually increased. In 1990, about a third of new units produced annually were private single-family homes.[10] The landmark 1980s district was Bežanijska Kosa—a preferred location for Belgrade's intellectual, artistic, and athletic elites—which is dominated by single-family homes, row

housing and small- to medium-scale apartment buildings, many with private and semi-private yards.

Societal Transformation and Belgrade's Housing Patterns since 1989

The ascent of Milošević's regime in 1989 marked the beginning of one of the most catastrophic periods in Serbia's long history. The downward spiral upon which the republic plunged is too familiar to East European specialists to warrant a lengthy account; still, it is useful recap the basics: between 1991 and 1994, during the bloody wars with Croatia and Bosnia, Serbia's GDP fell by 60%, the hyperinflation of 1992-93 turned out to be the second highest ever recorded in world history, unemployment reached a quarter of the population, and the country was subject to strict international sanctions. Social stratification grew dramatically: between 1993 and 2000, the Gini coefficient measuring income inequality rose from 0.176 to 0.308.[11]

Whereas the new regime initiated few reforms and was largely indifferent to urban issues, one of the few policy overhauls it undertook was the 1992 Law on Housing, which led to a mass privatization of housing units throughout the country. By the end of 1993, the percentage of privately owned dwellings in Belgrade skyrocketed to 95%. By most accounts, members of the political elite gained easy access to the largest and most desirable units designated for sale; this was part of a package of strategies by which communist elites converted their political capital into economic capital.

Simultaneously, the public sector slashed funding for housing maintenance. It also largely withdrew from housing production, thus bringing an end to the decades-long era of large collectivist residential buildings constructed under government auspices and destined for public ownership. The share of individual housing grew from about 35% in 1990 to about 75% in

2000.[12] The initiative in city-building was passed to the fast-burgeoning[13] but highly fragmented and cash-poor private construction sector.[14] Public policy regarding urban issues was put on the back burner to the point that its basic legal instrument—the building permit—came to be viewed as an optional piece of paper by wide segments of the Serb population.[15]

The cumulative effects of these developments were generally negative, at least for the large majority of Belgrade's citizenry. To begin with, the number of dwelling units produced per year decreased dramatically (e.g., even in 2003, after Serbia's relative stabilization, new housing production per year was only one-half of production in 1990). Housing quality also deteriorated. For the first time in many years, Belgrade experienced serious issues with lack of affordability, overcrowding and homelessness, all of which were exacerbated by the entry of the war refugees. A boom in the construction of officially unsanctioned, self-built residences served as a partial solution to the problem. In 1997, the number of illegally built dwelling units matched those built legally, thus converting urban informality into a new norm both socially and spatially.[16]

Belgrade's authorities had tolerated limited amount of self-built housing during the communist era as well. Such housing was, however, was generally located on the urban fringe and was constructed mostly by rural residents of modest means aiming to gain access to urban jobs and services—a phenomenon common in many developing countries. This time, however, illegal housing became a strategy of the new entrepreneurs, including some members of Milošević's circle, to usurp urban green space and infrastructure. Dedinje became ridden with illegally built (and often heavily guarded) homes whose opulence matched, if not exceeded, that of their early-20th-century neighbors. In other parts of the city, entire new neighborhoods "erupted" spontaneously over a few short years. The most obvious example is perhaps Padina—a neighborhood of individually constructed middle- to upper-middle single-family homes, which

was not even on the map (or in the census) in the year 1990. The neighborhood, where everything (from houses to streets) was built without building permits, is currently in the process of post-factum legalization. There are, however, many other, smaller constellations of illegal upscale homes in districts such as Zemun and Palilula.

The fast-paced change, chaos, and growing social stratification that defined Belgrade during the transition have been accompanied by a sharp increase in urban crime. In the mid-1990s, reported crime in Belgrade was 29% higher than in 1990, although it has decreased since then. A late-1990s survey conducted in the city highlighted citizens' serious concerns about crime (nearly half of the subjects shared that they felt either somewhat unsafe or very unsafe when walking in their neighborhoods at night). The survey also pointed to deep and widespread mistrust of the police and the judicial system, which led to an unwillingness to report crime.[17] Nationwide surveys implemented about the same time also showed high levels of mistrust of public institutions, varying from 57% (mistrust of the police and the judiciary) to 65% (mistrust of the state government).[18] These findings provide an important context for our discussion on gated housing in Belgrade, since the literature has unequivocally identified urban crime and insecurity as one of the key causes of the phenomenon, as we highlight in the next section.

Theories on Gated Housing

Walled-off spaces are of course as old as city-building. Ancient and medieval cities were walled for protection and to keep the undesirables out. Military innovation rendered these walls obsolete across Europe; many were replaced by spectacular boulevards in the 18th and 19th centuries, most famously in Paris and Vienna. The mid-1800s marked the dawn of a new type of walls in European cities. Around that time, elite, *bourgeois* households formed walled enclaves

for security purposes.[19] In Islamic cities, including those in Ottoman Southeast Europe,[20] walled housing enclaves were ostensibly more widespread than in their Western counterparts.[21]

At the beginning of the 21st century, residential gating and securitization—which some have dubbed a new "architecture of fear"[22]—have become a global trend.[23] Gated residential enclaves have attracted enormous attention in both the media and the academic literature because of their symbolic significance: critics see them as the paradigmatic example of citizen retreat from the collective to the private sphere; i.e., the material manifestation of what Robert Rich once termed "the secession of the successful."[24]

Scholars have identified several reasons for the rising popularity of modern urban gates. Many point to structural causes, namely the globalizing world economy. They emphasize the increased mobility of capital and the marginalization of labor since the late 1970s, which tend to widen income disparities, weaken social solidarity, worsen urban poverty and bolster urban crime.[25] As proof of this theory, scholars note that gated housing features prominently in countries with wide income gaps and high crime levels (e.g., the United States and Latin American nations).[26] As similar conditions now prevail in the post-communist world, it is not surprising that gated enclaves have spread in some cities in Russia and China.[27]

On the demand side, the literature notes three main household motivations for gating: security, status and lifestyle.[28] The first refers to the proliferation of gated housing in response to urban crime. Fear of crime, however, may often translate into a broader fear of "others," especially those of different social backgrounds. The second motivation entails elites' preferences to reside in exclusive compounds where gates serve as spatial signifiers of social standing. The third points to households' aspirations to gain access to high-quality services (e.g., green space and sports facilities), which may be unavailable to the wider public. All three

motivations can be placed in the broader context of public-sector failure (i.e., failure to guarantee safety, failure to provide public services, etc.) and the augmented role of the private sector in city-building.[29] Some authors argue that the proliferation of gated communities is due to a private sector that deliberately promotes a discourse of urban fear and sells gating as a guarantee of safety, exclusivity and market stability even when crime is decreasing.[30]

The above explanations, however, are to a large extent based on the "Western" experience of gated residential communities—particularly the U.S. experience. Indeed, some observers have treated the phenomenon as a mere export of U.S. urban ideals and patterns, thus neglecting its rich global history and the wide variety of locally specific causes and patterns. The limited yet fast-burgeoning literature on gating in Eastern Europe seems to follow this research logic.[31] Whereas gated enclaves have become a worldwide phenomenon and some explanations of their popularity may apply across the globe, our study of Belgrade adds a complementary perspective that stresses the significance of local traditions and local social and cultural perceptions.

There are good reasons to suspect that the proliferation of gated residences in Belgrade is not merely a product of global influences. Gated housing spread around the city in the 1990s, when Yugoslavia was under international sanctions, foreign investment was absent, foreign firms did not take part in the housing market, and Western (especially U.S.) cultural ideals were hardly popular. The form of gating also differed from that of Western prototypes. Large, developer-initiated gated communities did not even appear in Belgrade until 2006-07.[32] Because of the fragmentation of the local building sector and the prevalence of self-built housing strategies, most gated housing in Belgrade is enclosed individually rather than in large, organized groups.

Thus, some traditional hypotheses, such as gating as protection from crime and gating as display of status are worth exploring in Belgrade (within the context of increased crime and socio-economic division in Serbian society); others, however, such as gating as a means of enhancing lifestyles and securing access to shared luxury amenities, are hardly applicable. Rather than accepting such explanations, it is useful to explore how gating in Belgrade relates to household aspirations for securing privacy and demarcating private property and private territory (i.e., the type of spatial behaviors that were largely denied during communism). Such a connection makes sense in the context of the small but important body of literature in sociology and anthropology that has identified a low appreciation of the public realm, as well as a widespread turn toward private, family- and individual-centered strategies of everyday life as key dimensions of contemporary East European cultures.

In Russia, for example, scholars have long emphasized the prominence of post-communist values of *personalism* and *privatism*[33] that entail mass skepticism toward civic activities and institutions, widespread perceptions of public-sector failure, and a sharpened focus on the personal and the familial. Such social trends have recently been connected with spatial changes in the built fabric of Moscow where public spaces have declined over the last twenty years, but the number of private, gated and guarded enclaves has sharply risen.[34] In Bulgaria and Romania, authors have commented on cultures of aggressive individualism and extreme social "atomization" that undermine efforts to facilitate communal involvement.[35] Such trends may be even more pronounced in Serbia than in its neighbors, following the colossal state failure in the 1990s. The urban environment expresses socio-cultural trends, individualism, and social atomization that are well-reflected in the variety of city-building strategies in Belgrade that occur without public-sector sanction or participation.[36]

In short then, we hypothesize that gated housing proliferated in Belgrade right after 1989 not necessarily as a result of Western influences and only partially for reasons identified in the literature, such as household search for safety and status. There are additional household motivations that have to do with local views of the significance of private space, its protection and its demarcation. In other words, we conceptualize gating as the urban spatial expression of the type of *privatism* that scholars of post-socialist societies and cultures have already shown.

Gated Housing in Belgrade

Data collection sites

In order to explore household aspirations behind the proliferation of gated housing in Belgrade, we surveyed 405 subjects in areas in which, according to expert evaluation by Belgrade's Urban Planning Institute and the Institute of Sociology at the University of Belgrade, gated homes are routinely found. The research sites were selected to reflect the historic evolution of the city. Approximately equal numbers of responses were solicited in three types of urban neighborhoods: traditional or pre-communist (Dedinje and the nearby Senjak and Banovo Brdo), communist-era (Bežanijska Kosa), and post-communist (Padina, Višnjička Banja, and Pregrevica; see Figure 2 for the location of the research sites). In selecting these sites, we hoped to detect possible differences in motivations for gating premised on the different histories and the different socio-spatial characteristics of the neighborhoods.

Specifically, as mentioned earlier, Dedinje and the adjacent areas are the traditional *bourgeois* parts of the city; they have a high concentration of upscale individual homes (Figure 3 provides a snapshot of Dedinje). These areas were utilized by communist elites as well and have recently experienced new construction. In contrast, Bežanijska Kosa was settled primarily during

the last communist decade with a mixture of middle- and upper-end housing and has undergone some additional growth mostly during the 1990s (Figure 4 illustrates housing in Bežanijska Kosa). And the Padina-type settlements were constructed almost entirely via individual (and often illegal) housing strategies right after 1990 (Figure 5 provides a view of Padina).

Summary of survey findings

The survey, which targeted eligible adults and was conducted in the summer of 2008, included questions on demographic, housing, and quality-of-life issues, as well as attitudinal questions and questions focusing on specific household motivations for gating and securitization. Most questions were standardized, but there were also some that allowed open-ended answers. A review of the basic demographics reveals that the survey captured the expected differences in the socio-spatial dynamics of the neighborhoods[37] (see Tables 1 and 2 for a summary of the basic demographic and housing characteristics). Income was highest in the traditionally affluent areas and lowest in the post-1989 districts: whereas 21% of households in the old districts earned over 160,000 New Serbian Dinars per month (approximately $2,500—about four times the national average), the corresponding number in the self-built post-1989 neighborhoods was only 2%.

Educational differences were equally stark, with 61% of subjects in traditional areas reporting college or higher education, as compared to 22% in the post-1989 areas. Housing ownership was very high in all surveyed neighborhoods: about 95%, which is similar to the citywide average. However, as expected, the housing stock of Padina-type areas turned out to be much newer (e.g., 91% of dwellings were built after 1990) and included a significantly higher share of single-family homes erected by individual owners.

The overwhelming majority of residences in the sample had some type of physical enclosure that surrounded their yards and separated them from the public street (i.e., they were

gated); only 6% had no gates at all. Almost all gates surrounded individual buildings, rather than groups (Table 3 summarizes types of gating and security devices). The types of gating varied widely from low, see-through fences to over two-meter-tall fortress-like enclosures. The latter, however, comprised only 11% of the total sample (we categorized the gates in three groups, from low/transparent to tall/solid). Security devices of various types (e.g., alarm systems, interphones, security cameras, guards, guard dogs, etc.) were owned by about half of the households (52%).[38] Most residences had one or two such devices.

There was a positive relationship between gate type and number of security devices; i.e., households choosing to live in homes separated from public space by tall and impermeable physical barriers were more likely to employ security devices for extra protection. Both variables had a positive relationship with household income; i.e., wealthier households had a greater proclivity toward both gating and securitization.

This simple data summary suggests that residents of the surveyed neighborhoods are serious about controlling outsiders' access to their homes—whether through physical enclosure, security mechanisms, or both. These findings make sense in the context of residents' views regarding both crime and privacy in the city. Nearly 60% of the subjects reported being strongly or somewhat concerned about urban crime (Figure 6 summarizes the results). Levels of trust in public institutions (state government, municipal government, and police) were extremely low; few respondents expected much help from them. All institutions were mistrusted by majorities of respondents to degrees similar to those found by the nationwide surveys mentioned earlier in this paper.

Perhaps even more alarmingly, subjects had relatively low interpersonal trust: whereas a strong majority trusted their neighbors, just over half trusted "strangers" walking in the

neighborhood; in fact, only 45% agreed, strongly or somewhat, that "most people" can be trusted. Whereas such sentiments did not translate into fear of collective urban spaces (i.e., nearly 90% of the subjects enjoyed strolling in public spaces like parks and plazas), it did coincide with a strong desire to guarantee privacy; i.e., to protect one's residential environment from intrusion (an idea supported, strongly or somewhat, by 90% of subjects).

When we asked questions regarding the specific reasons subjects chose to live in a gated, protected environment,[39] the results highlighted differences between motives for gating in Belgrade and motives for gating in Western cities (as described in the literature). Although subjects were concerned about urban safety, only 35% believed that the physical enclosure of their yards reduces the odds of criminals entering their homes. Some 22% shared that the gates served to protect them from the gazes of their neighbors, with the number rising to 35% when the question was posed in terms of "strangers" in the neighborhood.

Protection from external factors, including dirt, dust, noise, and traffic, received still higher scores (nearly half of the subjects identified it as either the "most important" or an "important" reason for gating)—a result reflecting predominantly negative views of the quality of neighborhood public space. Enclosed spaces were deemed extremely beneficial for the safety of children. Finally, about a third of subjects agreed that gating is important or very important in protecting the market value of a residence (Figure 7 illustrates these results).

The status question, which asked whether gates yield a certain prestige, generated extremely little enthusiasm among subjects. However, when the question was posed slightly differently—whether gates make a residence look more sophisticated—the question received affirmative answers from half of the respondents. This result suggests that gating may be perceived as means of projecting high status, even if respondents do not care to admit this

directly. Many subjects also thought gating enhanced the aesthetic appearance of a residence, and even more saw it as an important factor in making a residence fit into its neighborhood—findings that seem to suggest a certain re-appreciation of Belgrade's architectural traditions predating the communist period.

Moreover, gates were deemed a key guarantor of privacy: 29% of subjects rated them as a very important factor and 49% as an important factor in this regard. In fact, respondents ranked privacy second only to children's safety in the list of motivations for gating. There was also a strong consensus that gates are an essential material means of marking private territory: 22% of subjects agreed that gates were a very important factor and 45% that they were an important factor in marking what is "rightfully yours." Thus, territoriality turned out a more influential reason for gating than the two most commonly cited in the literature: crime and status.

A look at the same data at the neighborhood level reveals slight variations in household motivations depending on the type of urban setting. For example, whereas aesthetic "fit into the neighborhood" and "sophistication" arguments carried slightly more weight in the older urban areas, in the post-1989, Padina-type neighborhoods it was separation from neighbors, as well as privacy and demarcation of private property, that generated a more enthusiastic endorsement (e.g., 80% of respondents in Padina-type areas agreed that gates are important or very important in marking what is "yours," as compared to 60% in Dedinje-type areas). Safety and protection from external factors (noise, dust, traffic, etc.) generated the most agreement in Bežanijska Kosa.

These contrasts suggest how motivations for living in gated housing vary in relation to the history and the socio-spatial features of the neighborhoods. Whereas symbolic and aesthetic factors play a more significant role in traditionally exclusive districts like Dedinje, which have a history of upper-class residential gating that significantly predates the communist period, in more

socially mixed areas like Bežanijska Kosa, pragmatic considerations like safety and protection from the deficiencies of the public space in front gain additional momentum. In the Padina-type areas—the ones settled quickly and illegally during the 1990s, where the status of land titles is murky and land ownership conflicts abound, the gates play as important a role as material and symbolic markers of private property (Figures 8, 9, and 10 illustrate these points).

The survey also posed open-ended questions that asked respondents to outline in a few words the advantages and disadvantages of gated residential environments (these questions were asked before the standardized questions in order to prevent the categories of the standardized questions from influencing the free-styled answers). Privacy and protection (sometimes conflated as the "protection of privacy") were by far the most common responses. Both, however, had multiple meanings that became evident as subjects expanded on their answers. Privacy was commonly explained in terms of "separation from the outside," "marking my space," "marking my property," "enclosing my space," "so my neighbors can't see me," "separation from neighbors," "because it is in my ownership/possession," "define my own territory," "so you can see the border of your property," and so that "I know what is mine." Protection meant everything from protection from external factors such as noise and dust to protection for children and pets, from protection from thieves to protection from "curious people" and "passers-by." It also meant that "only familiar people can enter my property."

Of those who commented on whether gating has disadvantages, about a third claimed that gates "block the view," are "ugly" or "primitive," are a "violation of public space," cause "isolation" from one's neighbors, make it "impossible to talk to people" and make people walking in the areas feel "under threat." Most subjects, however, saw gates as having no disadvantages, and even those who identified disadvantages saw gates as simply inevitable:

"everybody" has them; they are a "necessity." This majority view suggests that the new pattern of individual, explicitly private housing has attained an aura of normality, even in a city where the communist regime had for decades planned its extermination.

The future of gated housing in Belgrade

Until the current global financial crisis, Serbia has been on the economic upswing for nearly a decade. Since 2000, GDP has been growing at 5-6% per year. And although unemployment remains in the double digits, the average net salary in Serbia increased 13% between mid-2006 and mid-2007. In Belgrade, salaries rose an astonishing 35% over the same time period, with wealth now shared by a larger, professional class as opposed to the grey-economy profiteers of the 1990s. By 2007, the private building sector finally matched the annual housing productivity during the 1980s.[40] In 2007, Foreign Direct Investment was 2 billion Euros and changes in planning laws made the participation of foreign firms in Belgrade's housing market much easier.

As conditions change, yet another housing form is emerging on the scene. This is the large, developer-built gated community offering a full range of luxury amenities from swimming pools to decorative gardens and, in some cases, even golf courses. So far Belgrade has only a few such developments; they comprise a minuscule share of the total housing stock. Yet they point to a new direction in upper-end housing that, for good or ill, makes gating in Belgrade more like gating in Western cities.

The new gated communities, many of which are still under construction, are spread in the most desirable areas of the metropolis and are typically backed by a mixture of local and foreign capital. They target foreigners and expatriates, much as they target local elites. They sell a clear message of social exclusivity mixed with protection from outsiders. Dedinje, for example,

recently became home to the *Panorama*, a residential complex, whose promotional literature depicts it as follows: "The exclusive *Panorama Dedinje* development project presents an extraordinary opportunity to those interested in buying a residence of elegant design and the highest standard in luxurious living…. The development is fenced and only tenants will have access to the central atrium. It will have 24-hour-security and maintenance services, and video surveillance connected to the security room."[41]

Perhaps ironically, the largest of the new gated enclaves is in Novi Beograd—the grandest and most representative of the standardized housing districts in Belgrade. There, amidst the heroic residential towers of the communist past, one finds the newly minted *Bellville*—a complex of nearly two thousand dwelling units and various luxury offices, all next to a mall. According to a member of the development team, *Bellville* will be "the fanciest place…it will have five rows of flowers, garages, security cameras and guards."[42]

Conclusion

The built environment, Lewis Mumford said some sixty years ago, presents "in legible script, the complicated processes and changes that are taking place in civilization itself."[43] The shifting "gates of Belgrade" throughout the 20th and 21st centuries aptly illustrate this point. The once-communist capital city of ceremonial collectivism—collectivism that was disrupted only by the high gates around the homes of the *Politburo*-types, the most communist of communists—is no longer. The old *bourgeois* habit of diligently carving private space is regaining ground and becoming a routine phenomenon.

In the absence of foreign capital, foreign consumers, Western cultural influences and a developed building sector capable of producing large gated compounds, the trend gained ground

after 1989 as an indigenous move toward restoring historic architectural patterns in the construction of individual homes. It was, to an extent, a response to growing urban insecurity and a quickly stratifying urban society. More than fear from crime, though, the trend reflected a widespread, rejuvenated craving to secure one's mastery over one's own space. It marked, in material terms, a conscientious departure from the principles of collectivism that communist elites sought to impose on others, yet refused to accept in their own personal lives.

Today, however, the local tradition is joining forces with the global industry of gating. The growing presence of foreign capital, both financial and cultural, which has been partially paved by new laws, as well as the maturation of demand for gated and securitized housing are preparing the ground for the type of luxury gated community that is quite familiar to Western audiences. Along with the new malls and hypermarkets, the first large-scale communities in Belgrade, which sell security and status in tandem, mark via spatial means Serbia's re-integration into the Western world. Whether or not this seems like a good thing may depend on which side of the gates you are standing.

Figure 1. A large residential building in Novi Beograd—the type so beloved by communist authorities from the 1960s through the 1980s. The architecture of such buildings displayed the communist values of collectivism, uniformity and egalitarianism in plain, visual terms.

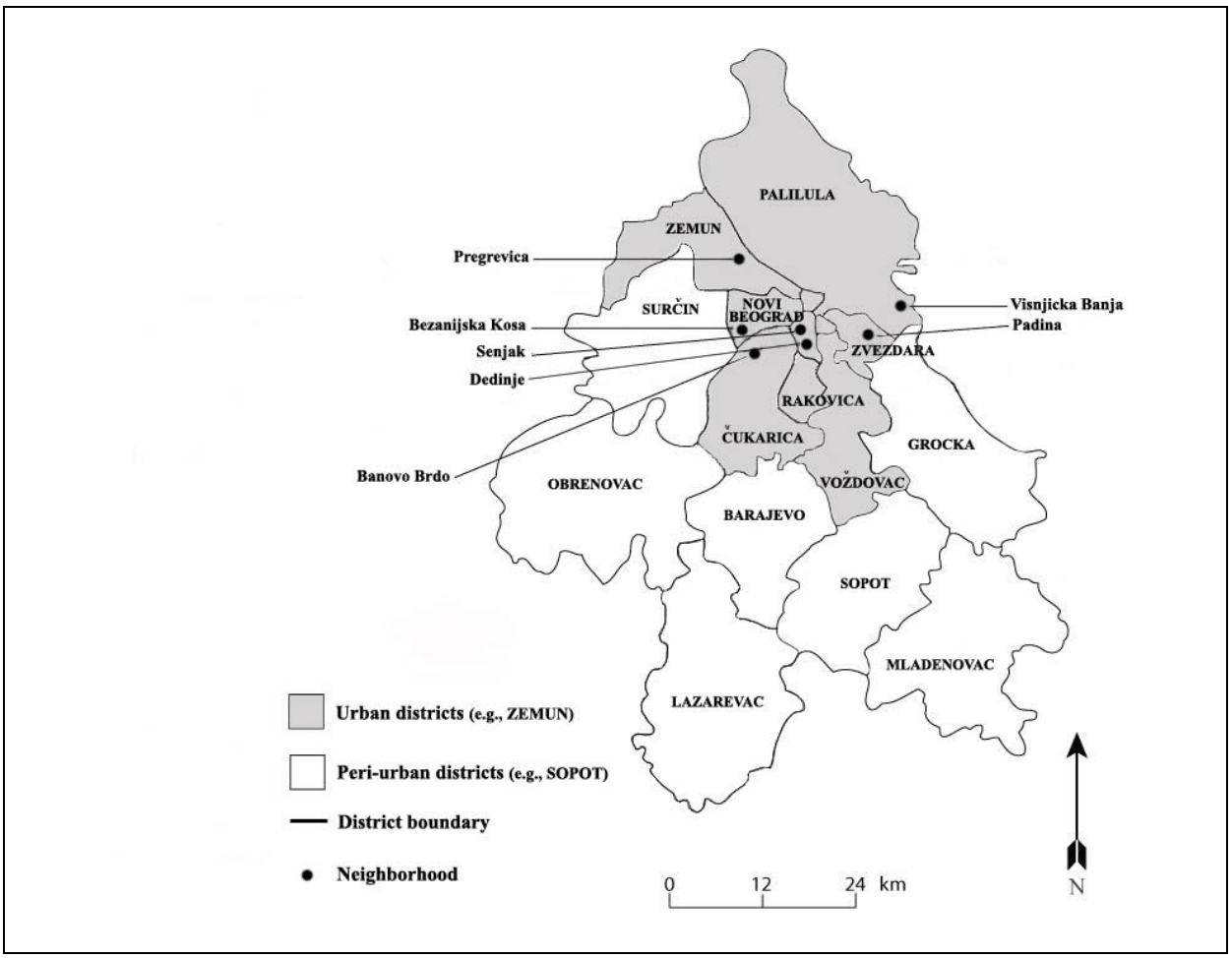

Figure 2. Map of the City of Belgrade and the metropolitan region showing the research sites.

Figure 3. This heavily gated and guarded villa in Dedinje in fact belongs to a famous pop singer.

Figure 4. Gated housing in Bežanijska Kosa.

Figure 5. Gated housing in Padina.

		Traditional neighborhood	Communist-era neighborhood	Post-communist neighborhood	All neighborhoods
Subject's gender	Male	.45	.48	.46	.46
N valid cases = 404	Female	.55	.52	.54	.54
Subject's age	18-30 years of age	.21	.21	.14	.19
N valid cases = 405	31-40 years of age	.09	.16	.19	.15
	41-50 years of age	.19	.14	.19	.17
	51-60 years of age	.23	.32	.28	.27
	61-70 years of age	.12	.12	.17	.14
	>70 years of age	.17	.04	.02	.08
Subject's education	College degree	.61	.53	.22	.46
N valid cases = 399	Some college	.09	.13	.20	.14
	High school degree	.24	.31	.49	.34
	< high school	.06	.02	.09	.05
Household monthly income	>160,000	.21	.18	.02	.14
in RSD = New Serbian Dinar	80,000-160,000	.29	.34	.30	.31
RSD 1,000 = $16	40,000-79,999	.30	.33	.46	.36
N valid cases = 274	20,000-39,999	.17	.13	.14	.15
	<20,000	.04	.02	.07	.04

Table 1. Select characteristics of survey subjects (percentages).

		Traditional neighborhood	Communist-era neighborhood	Post-communist neighborhood	All neighborhoods
Housing ownership	Own	.93	.98	.96	.95
N valid cases = 399	Rent	.07	.02	.04	.05
Housing type	Single-family	.49	.47	.75	.57
N valid cases = 405	Part of two-family	.17	.09	.10	.12
	Part of multi-family	.33	.44	.14	.30
	Other	.01	.00	.00	.02
Housing size (sq m)	>400	.00	.00	.03	.01
N valid cases = 373	301-400	.02	.00	.09	.04
	201-300	.08	.11	.25	.15
	151-200	.15	.14	.19	.16
	101-150	.20	.18	.18	.19
	51-100	.43	.56	.20	.39
	<50	.12	.01	.06	.06
Year of building	After 2000	.04	.01	.48	.17
N valid cases = 364	From 1990 to 1999	.10	.55	.43	.36
	From 1949 to 1989	.39	.44	.09	.30
	Before 1949	.47	.00	.01	.16
Year of moving in	After 2000	.17	.14	.62	.31
N valid cases = 400	From 1990 to 1999	.13	.63	.32	.35
	From 1949 to 1989	.61	.24	.05	.30
	Before 1949	.08	.00	.01	.03
Means of acquisition	Self-built/hired builder	.47	.05	.85	.48
N valid cases = 364	Bought from builder	.23	.80	.08	.35
	Bought from prev. owner	.27	.14	.05	.15
	Other	.03	.02	.00	.01
Yard type	Private yard	.78	.81	.90	.83
N valid cases = 401	Shared yard	.22	.19	.10	.17

Table 2. Select housing characteristics (percentages).

		Traditional neighborhood	Socialist-era neighborhood	Post-socialist neighborhood	All neighborhoods
Gating	No gating	.01	.10	.07	.06
N valid cases = 383	Low/transparent gates	.37	.27	.31	.32
	Medium gates	.56	.47	.49	.51
	High/solid gates	.06	.15	.13	.11
Number of buildings gated jointly	Single building	.96	.88	.84	.89
	Two buildings	.03	.05	.07	.05
N valid cases = 351	More than two buildings	.00	.07	.09	.05
	Other	.01	.00	.00	.00
Security devices	No security devices	.56	.44	.43	.48
N valid cases = 399	One security device	.21	.35	.41	.32
	Two security devices	.14	.13	.11	.13
	Three security devices	.04	.06	.05	.05
	Four security devices	.04	.02	.00	.02
	Five security devices	.01	.00	.00	.01

Table 3. Gating and security systems (percentages).

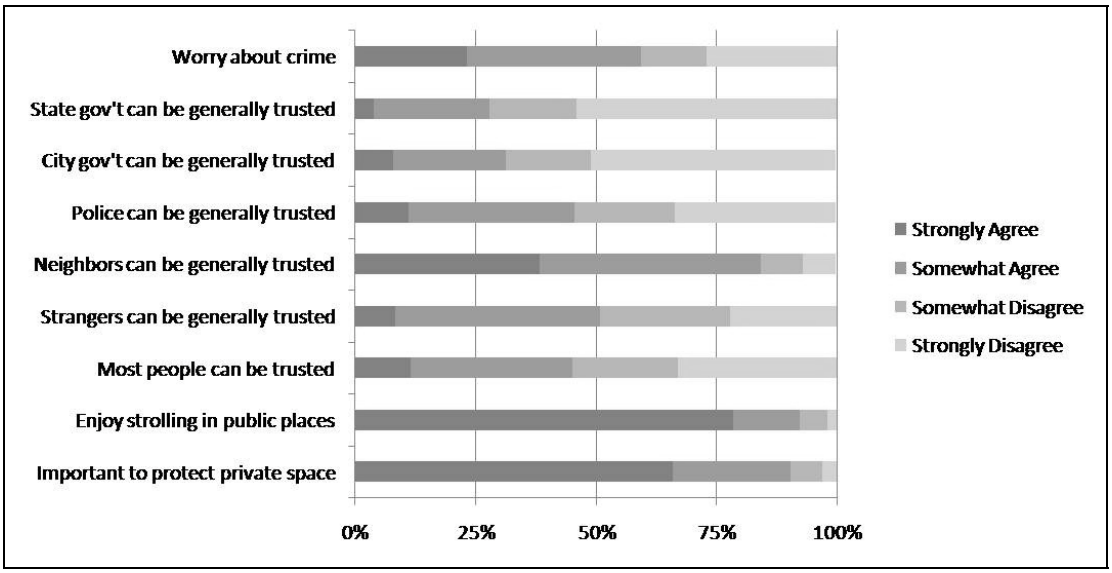

Figure 6. Summary of responses to attitudinal questions.

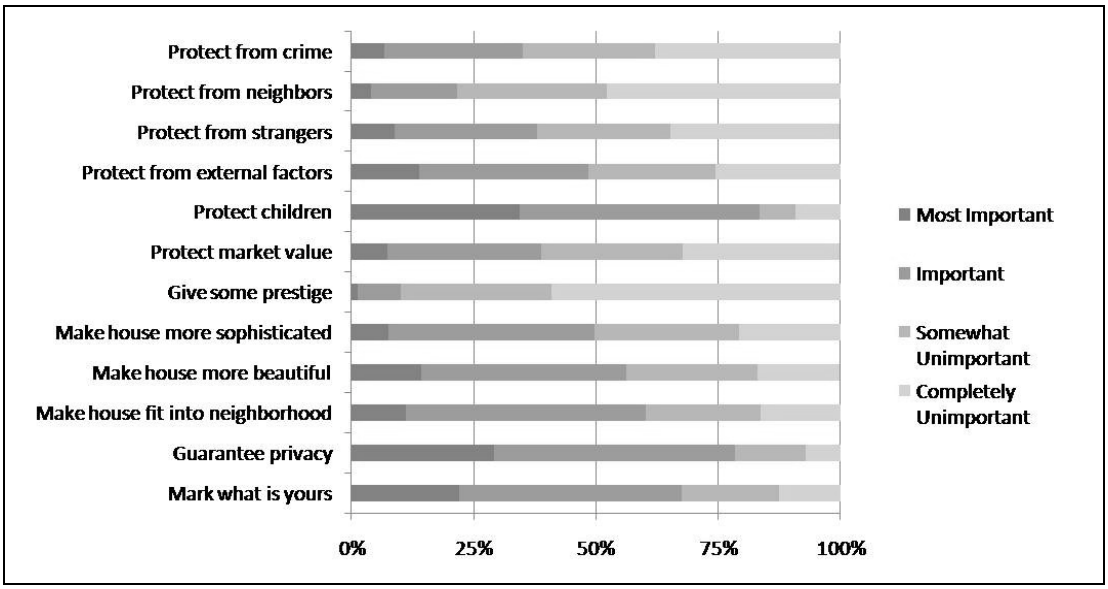

Figure 7. Summary of responses regarding possible factors for living in a gated residence.

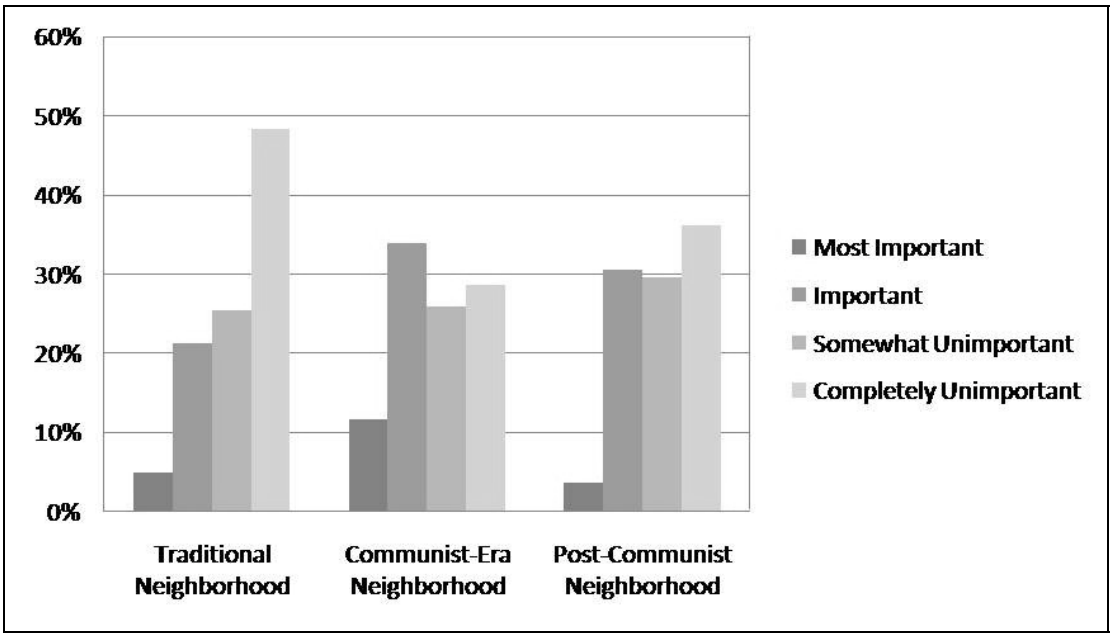

Figure 8. Views on safety as a factor in gating (by neighborhood type).

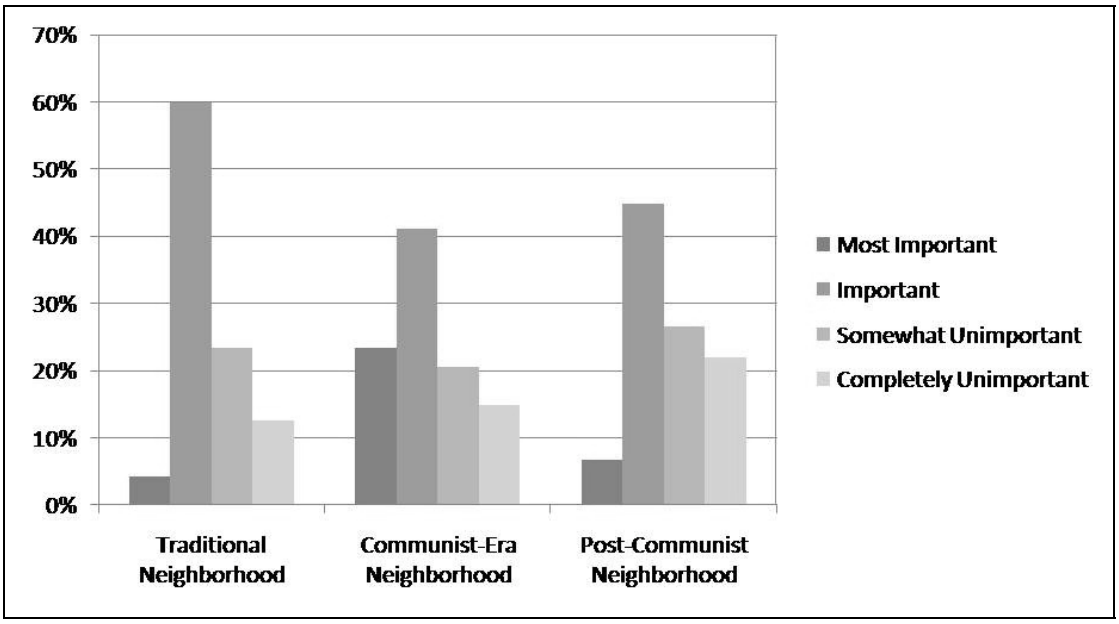

Figure 9. Views on aesthetic fit into the neighborhood as a factor in gating (by neighborhood type).

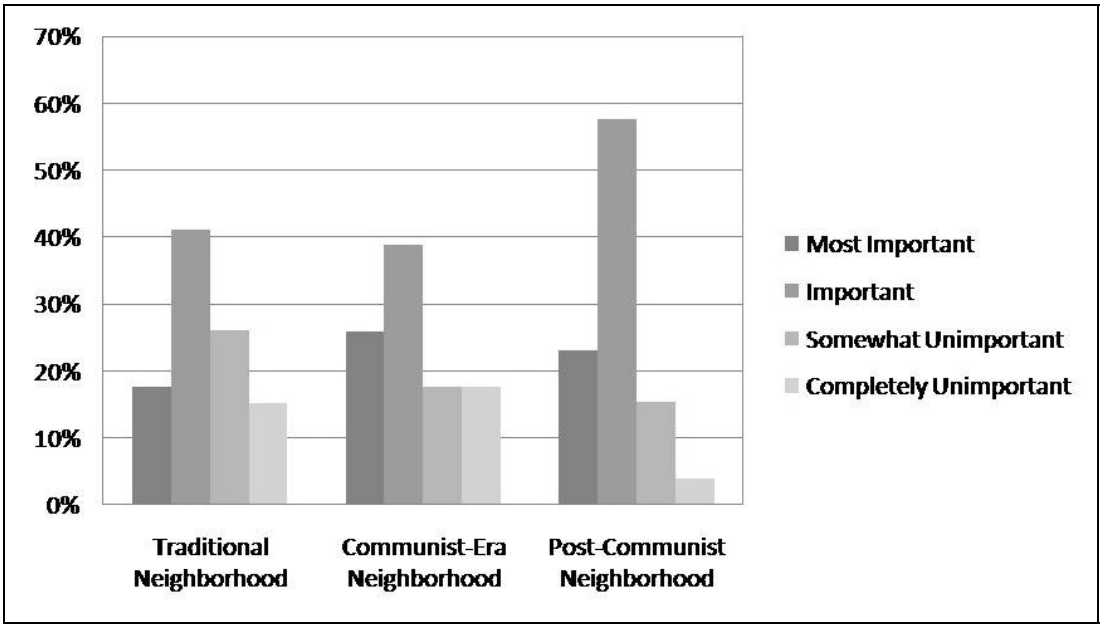

Figure 10. Views on territorial demarcation as factor in gating (by neighborhood type).

Notes

---

[1] United Nations, *World Urbanization Prospects: The 2007 Revision Population Database,* 2008, Population Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat (June 13, 2008) (http://esa.un.org/unup/).

[2] Institute for Informatics and Statistics, 2005, *Statistical Yearbook of Belgrade*, Belgrade: Institute for Informatics and Statistics; See also Sonia Hirt, "City Profile: Belgrade, Serbia, 2009," *Cities* 26, no. 5: 293-303.

[3] Sasha Tsenkova, 2005, *Country Profiles on the Housing Sector: Serbia and Montenegro*, New York and Geneva: United Nations Economic Commission for Europe.

[4] Most urban land and large means of production (with the exception of those in agriculture) were nationalized in Yugoslavia by 1948. See Zorica Nedović-Budić and Branco Carvić, 2006, "Waves of Planning: A Framework for Studying the Evolution of Planning Systems and Empirical Insights from Serbia and Montenegro," *Planning Perspectives* 21, no. 4: 393-425.

[5] The Yugoslav authorities, however, took a more decentralized approach to housing distribution than most other communist regimes. Housing was allocated by the enterprises where workers were employed rather than by the state or municipal governments. See Mina Petrović, 2001, "Post-Socialist Housing Policy Transformation in Yugoslavia and Belgrade," *European Journal of Housing Policy* 1, no. 2: 211-231.

[6] Miodrag Vujošević and Zorica Nedović-Budić, 2006, "Planning and the Societal Context: The Case of Belgrade, Serbia," in Sasha Tsenkova and Zorica Nedović-Budić (eds), *The Urban Mosaic of Post-socialist Europe: Space, Institutions, Policy,* Heidelberg: Springer Physica-Verlag, 275-294. See also Sasha Tsenkova, 2009, *Housing Policy Reforms in Post-socialist Europe: Lost in Transition*, Heidelberg: Springer Physica-Verlag.

[7] Petrović, Post-socialist housing policy.

[8] See, for example, Peter Lizon, 1996, "East-Central Europe: The Unhappy Heritage of Socialist Mass Housing," *Journal of Architectural Education* 50, 104-114.

[9] Sonia Hirt, 2008, "Landscapes of Post-modernity: Changes in the Built Fabric of Belgrade and Sofia since the End of Socialism," *Urban Geography* 29, no. 8: 785-809.

[10] Sreten Vujović and Mina Petrović, 2007, "Belgrade's Post-Socialist Evolution: Reflections by the Actors in the Development Process," in Kiril Stanilov (ed.), *The Post-socialist City: Urban Form and Space Transformations in Central and Eastern Europe*, Dordrecht: Springer.

[11]See Milena Jovković, Miroslav Zdravković and Radmila Mitrović, 2002, *Federal Republic of Yugoslavia: Trade Potential and Comparative Advantages*. (http://www.wiiw.ac.at/balkan/files/Jovićić+Zdravković+Dragutinović.pdf). (October 16, 2009). According to the United Nations Human Development Index 2007-2008, the latest available Gini coefficient for Serbia is 0.30, showing no improvement since 2000.

[12] Petrović, "Post-socialist Housing Policy;" Vujović and Petrović, "Belgrade's Post-socialist Evolution;" and Miroljub Hadjić, 2002, "Rethinking Privatization in Serbia," *Eastern European Economics* 40, no. 6: 6-23.

[13] The number of construction firms more than quadrupled between 1990 and 2000, from 470 to 2411 (Institute for Informatics and Statistics, 2005, *Statistical Yearbook of Belgrade*, p. 189).

[14] The vast majority of private construction firms, especially during the 1990s, were very small (having less than 10 employees) and lacked the capacity to erect larger housing projects (Sasha Tsenkova, *Country Profiles*).

[15] The "legitimacy crisis" of urban planning during the 1990s has been reported across the post-communist world. As a result, illegal construction became widespread in many countries. Serbia is one of the most extreme examples (e.g., Zorica Nedović-Budić, 2001, "Adjustment of Planning Practice to the New Eastern and Central European context," *Journal of the American Planning Association* 67, no.1, 38-52; and Sonia Hirt, 2005, "Planning the Post-communist City: Experiences from Sofia," *International Planning Studies* 10, no. 3/4: 219-240.

[16] Vujović and Petrović, Belgrade's post-socialist evolution.

[17] The survey, which was statistically representative, showed that 21% of Belgrade's residents felt very safe when walking in their neighborhood at night, 31% felt rather safe, 33% felt somewhat unsafe, and 14% felt very unsafe. The results showed a sharp increase in feeling of urban insecurity as compared to a survey conducted in 1988. See Vesna Nikolić-Rastanić, 1998, *Victimization in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia* (October 7, 2009) (http://www.unicri.it/wwk/publications/books/reports/r11.php).

[18] See Eric Grody, 2004, "Serbia after Djindjić: War Crimes, Organized Crime, and Trust in Public Institutions," Problems *of Post-communism* 51, no.3: 101-7.

[19] For a concise history of residential stratification and gating, see Peter Marcuse, 2002, "The Partitioned City in History," in *Of States and Cities: The Partitioning of Urban Space*, Oxford: Oxford University Press. Regarding gated housing in 19th-century London, for instance, see P. J. Atkins, 1993, "How the West End was Won: The Struggle to Remove Street Barriers in Victorian London," *Journal of Historical Geography* 19, no.3: 265-277.

[20] Belgrade was formally under Ottoman rule between 1521 and 1867 but Islamic artifacts in the city are very few.

[21] On the Islamic urban tradition, see Janet Abu-Lughod, 1987, "The Islamic City: Historic Myth, Islamic Essence, and Contemporary Relevance," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 19, 155-176.

[22] Nan Ellin, ed., 1997, *Architecture of Fear*, New York: Princeton Architectural Press.

[23] Georg Glasze, Chris Webster and Klaus Frantz, 2006, *Private Cities: Global and Local Perspectives*, New York and London: Routledge.

[24] Robert Rich, 1991, "Secession of the Successful," *New York Times Magazine,* January 20.

[25] Setha Low, 2004, *Behind the Gates: Life, Security and the Pursuit of Happiness in Fortress America*, New York and London: Routledge.

[26] E.g., see Martin Coy, 2006, "Gated Communities and Urban Fragmentation in Latin America: The Brazilian Experience," *Urban Geography* 66: 121-132; and R. Salcedo and A. Torres, 2004, "Gated Communities in Santiago: Wall or Frontier," *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 28, no.1: 27-44.

[27] E.g., see Pu Miao, 2003, "Deserted Streets in a Jammed Town: The Gated Community in Chinese Cities and its Solution," *Journal of Urban Design* 8 (1): 45-66; and Mikhail Blinnikov, Andrei Shannin, Nikolay Sobolev, and Lyudmila Volkova, 2006, "Gated Communities in the Moscow Greenbelt: Newly Segregated Landscapes and the Suburban Russian Environment," *GeoJournal* 66, no. 1-2: 65-81.

[28] Edward Blakeley and Mary Gail Snyder, 1997, *Fortress America: Gated Communities in the United States*. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press and Cambridge: Lincoln Institute of Land Policy. See also Low, *Behind the Gates*.

[29] American retirees' golf communities, many of which are gated, are the paradigmatic example here.

[30] See Setha Low, 2001, "The Edge and the Center: Gated Communities and the Discourse of Urban Fear," *American Anthropologist* 103, no.1: 45-58.

[31] On gated communities in Hungary, for example, see Z. Cséfalvay, 2009, "The Demystification of Gating," *European Journal of Spatial Development* (October 16, 2009) (http://www.nordregio.se/EJSD/debate200902).

[32] Charlotte Johnson, 2009, *The Status of Gates in Belgrade: Notes on Styles and Markets*, Paper presented at the Conference, "*Gated and Guarded Housing in Eastern Europe*," Leipzig, Germany.

[33] Oleg Kharkhordin, 1995, "The Soviet Individual: Genealogy of a Dissimulating Animal," in *Global Modernities,* Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications; and Oleg Kharkhordin, 1997, "Reveal and Dissimulate: A Genealogy of Private Life in Russia," in *Public and Private in Theory and Practice: Perspectives on a Grand Dichotomy,* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

[34] Ekaterina Makarova, 2006, *The New Urbanism in Moscow: The Redefinition of Public and Private Space*, Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Sociological Association, Montreal.

[35] See Sorin Matei, 2004, "The Emergent Romanian Post-socialist Ethos: From Nationalism to Privatism," *Problems of Post-communism* 51: 40-47; and Venelin Ganev, 2007, *Preying on the State*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

[36] Petrović, Post-socialist housing policy.

[37] As Figure 2 shows, the neighborhoods are parts of Belgrade's 17 municipal regions, which comprise the formal administrative division of the metropolis. Most census data collected by Belgrade's Institute for Informatics and Statistics pertains to the 17 municipal regions. Such data, however, can be misleading because many of the regions are very large and include a wide variety of neighborhoods with sharply different socio-spatial features. Fortunately, a limited amount of data on education and employment is available at the neighborhood level for the years 1991 and 2002 (the years of the last two censuses) and allows a rare glimpse into the recent socio-spatial evolution of Belgrade. This data showed that older areas of the city such as Dedinje and Seniak, for example, have a highly educated population: in 1991, residents with college or higher education comprised 35% of all Dedinje's residents and 30% of those in Senjak; by 2002, the percentages increased to 39 and 34 respectively. In comparison, the city averages were 18% in 1991 and 21% in 2002. Furthermore, 60% of the population of Dedinje and 61% in Senjak were employed in the tertiary sector in 1991; the number increased to 83 and 81% respectively by 2002. The citywide averages were 46% in 1991 and 66% in 2002. In contrast, the percentage of persons with college or higher education in Višnjička Banja was well below city averages: 16% in both 1991 to 2002, even though the percentage of people in the tertiary sector increased from 45 to 71%. Such data suggests not only that Belgrade exhibited socio-spatial inequality at the end of communist period, but also that differences grew starker afterwards.
Our survey reflected these differences, proving again that socio-spatial inequality in Belgrade is deeply engrained.

[38] For the sake of the comparison: as of 2005, an estimated 23% of U.S. households had some type of a security device at home; the number is projected to grow to about 29% in 2009. See Parks Associates, 2005, *Home Security Update* (October 21, 2009) (http://www.parksassociates.com/research/reports/tocs/2005/security.htm).

[39] The questions asked respondents whether certain factors could be qualified as "most important," "important," "somewhat unimportant" or "completely unimportant" in their decision to live in a gated residence.

[40] This is about 7,000 new housing units per year. Colliers International Serbia, 2007, *Belgrade Residential Market—2nd Half of 2007* (October 29, 2009) (http://www.colliers.com/Markets/Serbia/MarketReports).

[41] Colliers International cited in Johnson, *The Status of Gates in Belgrade.*

[42] Interview with member of Bellville's project team cited in Johnson, *The Status of Gates in Belgrade.*

[43] Lewis Mumford, 1938, *The Culture of Cities*, New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, p. 403.